

Professional Standards Division

The Professional Standards Division was established during the administration of Colonel C.E. "Mel" Fisher on May 1, 1990, as part of a reorganization of the Patrol's management structure. The division was created to provide management with a centralized investigative unit that could conduct agency-wide, internal, disciplinary investigations in a fair, professional, and consistent manner. The establishment of the Professional Standards Division provided the Patrol with trained internal affairs investigators, improved investigative techniques, quality reports, and more consistent administrative discipline.

Prior to the inception of the Professional Standards Division, there were no written policies or procedures governing the administration of internal disciplinary investigations. Investigations of official misconduct were assigned to officers of various ranks and were not always conducted in a manner consistent with procedures used for internal affairs cases. Officers assigned to the same component as the accused were routinely assigned to investigate allegations of misconduct. In some instances the investigating officer was also the accused employee's supervisor. The lack of a full-time professional unit within the Patrol, for handling allegations of misconduct, many times resulted in inconsistent investigations, reports, and administrative punishment.

Notable incidents of alleged misconduct have occurred rarely in the Patrol's history; however, when those allegations of misconduct were brought to the attention of Patrol management the response has been swift and decisive. The 1980 investigation of allegations of ticket-fixing in Troop C was an important factor in Colonel Fisher's decision, as superintendent, to create an internal affairs unit within the Patrol. He cited his exposure to the progressive management style of Chief Clarence Kelley, of the Kansas City Police Department, as a contributing factor that influenced his decisions regarding training, written policy, and procedure directives when the Professional Standards Division was created. Colonel Fisher's exposure to the internal affairs policies of the Kansas City Police Department during his early years as a member of the Troop A management staff demonstrated to him the virtues of a centralized and professional internal affairs unit.

An interview conducted in 1980 with Ms. Tillie Sonnen, retired secretary to the early superintendents of the Missouri State Highway Patrol, revealed that internal disciplinary issues were not a phenomenon brought about by recent social changes or lapses in moral standards. Breaches of public trust by employees were recorded in early Patrol history and required the agency to take quick and decisive action in order to establish discipline and order within the organization.

Ms. Sonnen revealed in her interview that the Patrol's first disciplinary action occurred only six months after the organization was formed. The first incident of misconduct happened in February 1932 and resulted in the officer being terminated for taking a bribe. The officer later wrote Colonel Lewis Ellis a letter and apologized for betraying the trust placed in him, but the termination was upheld. A short time later, another officer was accused of misconduct for consuming alcoholic beverages while in uniform. The Patrol held a formal hearing, found the officer guilty, and fired him, too.

During the Professional Standards Division's brief history, various changes have been made to the written disciplinary policies and procedures. Some noteworthy changes to the Patrol directives and Section 43.150 of the Revised Statutes of Missouri included changes in 1990 that entitled the accused employee to have legal counsel present during an interview or interrogation related to a formal complaint. This policy change brought the Patrol into compliance with prevailing administrative procedures related to employee legal representation during internal discipline investigations.

In 1998, during the administration of Colonel Weldon L. Wilhoit major changes were made to Section 43.150 RSMo, as well as the Patrol's policy and procedure directive. The legislation changed the make-up of the disciplinary hearing board from five to six members, including one non-voting captain, one sergeant, and four members of the same rank. The new statute language also required the Patrol to provide the accused employee with copies of the internal investigation reports, and provided the accused employee the opportunity to respond in writing to the facts contained in the report. Additionally, the new language entitled the accused employee to a 48-hour period, after receiving a copy of the formal complaint, before being interviewed or being required to respond in writing.

Each change, whether in statute or directive, has been enacted in order to bring the Patrol's policies into compliance with prevailing administrative procedures and established case law related to internal discipline investigations, and to provide employees with a fair and impartial administrative due process system.

Directors of the Professional Standards Division:

Captain L.C. White	May 1, 1990 to September 30, 1992
Captain E.M. Raub	October 1, 1992 to July 22, 1994
Captain J.S. Gordon	July 23, 1994 to August 31, 1996
Captain J.L. Merritt	September 1, 1996 to August 31, 1997
Captain R.E. Bloomberg	September 1, 1997 to January 31, 2000

Lieutenant R.L. Walker	February 1, 2000 to February 28, 2000
Captain B.W. Jones	March 1, 2000 to July 31, 2005
Captain R.P. Stieffermann	August 1, 2005 to Present